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TAGS: PGOV PINR PREL RU UK
SUBJECT: "TEMPERATURE LOWERING" UNDER UK-RUSSIAN RELATIONS

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Richard LeBaron for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Russia/UK

¶1. (C/NF) Russia seeks to "work around" its intractable problems with the UK, and not allow them to hold hostage progress on areas such as the robust commercial and financial relationship between the countries. According to new Russian DCM Alexander Sternik, the fact that the UK is the second largest investor in Russia and trade has increased 30 percent over the last few years, coupled with Russia's one-billion dollar investment in Britain, could underpin a more productive relationship across the board. Sternik told the Charge during a courtesy call that President Medvedev and PM Brown had established a "good rapport" which will continue when they meet on the margins of the G-8.

Russia/U.S.

¶2. (C/NF) Sternik said that he and the 35 diplomats who work with him stand ready to help improve U.S./Russian relations, including on issues related to the Caucasus. He has high hopes for a positive, substantive result from President Obama's July 6-8 visit to Moscow, where work is underway to complete a strong Presidential Action Plan in time for the visit. Russia seeks to work with the U.S. to deepen economic ties, enhance security relationships, and promote stability - including through nuclear weapons reductions which will provide more weight to non-proliferation efforts with countries such as North Korea. Although he didn't have a read-out of the recent Ahmedinejad visit to Russia, Sternik said Russia has been encouraging Tehran to make the most of the forward leaning U.S. posture toward Iran reductions.

A Seasoned Diplomat

¶3. (C/NF) Sternik is engaging, knows his brief and has excellent command of English. He has recently been promoted from Political Minister to DCM. He served four years in the political section of the Russian Mission to the UN, working on conflict resolution, peacekeeping and general Security Council issues. Sternik also spent six years in the Horn of Africa, including Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia, and is an "African language specialist."

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LeBaron